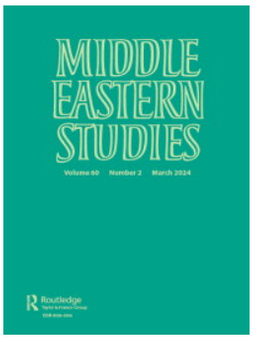

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The 1948 turmoil in Sanaa from the viewpoint of two Yemeni Jewish sources

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After the assassination of Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din on 17 February 1948/6 Rabiʿ II 1367, a new constitutional government was announced by the former opposition movement led by members of the Free Yemeni Movement (*ahrar al-yamaniyin*), the Iraqi military commander Jamal Jamil, and al-Sayyid Abdullah b. Ahmad al-Wazir. Abdullah al-Wazir was nominated by the opposition instead of Crown Prince (*wali al-ʿahd*) Ahmad Hamid al-Din (d. 1962/1382) to succeed to the imamate when Imam Yahya died. He declared himself imam and set up his office at Ghamdan citadel (*al-qasr*) in Sanaa shortly after Imam Yahya's death had been confirmed, but is said to have opposed his assassination. The movement was supported by Fadil a-Wartalani, an Algerian nationalist who was sent to Sanaa by the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo as an emissary, having been asked to do so by some Yemeni reformers in Cairo.[1]

The new government, however, was short-lived. When *Wali al-ʿahd* Ahmad Hamid al-Din (d. 1962/1382) was informed of his father's assassination, he also declared himself imam (*al-Nasir li-Din Allah* 'the Victor of God's Religion') and called for jihad against Imam al-Wazir and his government. About three weeks after the coup on 12 or 13 March 1948/3 Jumada I 1367, the city fell to Imam Ahmad's troops.[2] The inhabitants of Sanaa were overpowered and looted by tribal fighters on the order of Imam Ahmad, who in turn moved the capital to Taiz, where he resided until his natural death shortly before the revolution in 1962.[3]

This article presents two Yemeni Jewish accounts of the 1948 turmoil in Sanaa that were published in Hebrew, namely, those of Salim Mansura (later Shalom, 1916–2007) and Mordechai al-Zahiri (later Yitshari, 1930–).[4] Key data in these two personal reminiscences corresponds to Muslim-Yemeni sources (see below) and the research literature based on them. In terms of details, however, they could trigger controversy. It should therefore be clear that Mansura and M. al-Zahiri's accounts do not represent a universal picture of historical 'truth', but are two subjective narratives of the past imbedded in the political events of their time.[5] They tell their own 'truth' and perspective, and as such represent 'the world as their own and in their own terms'.[6] Among the Jewish accounts referring to the events, the reminiscences of Mansura and al-Zahiri are the most detailed. They therefore give valuable insights into the situation of the Muslim and Jewish, and with that, 'subaltern' inhabitants of Sanaa,[7] who as legally subordinated dhimmis ('protected people'), nonetheless constituted an integral part of Yemeni society.[8]

Muslim sources known to me and referring to the 1948 turmoil address neither circumstances in the Jewish neighbourhood nor how these events were perceived by Jews. Moreover, the accounts emerged within the discursive order of their context. Knowledge production on the aforementioned events, and the imamate in general, was shaped by post-1962 Yemeni discourse, which involved discrimination of members of the former elite and a certain degree of

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censorship.[9] It is no coincidence, so it seems, that most of the voices known until recently are those of men who supported the coup of 1948 and the 1962 revolution.

The recollections of Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Shami, who supported the coup of 1948 and later the revolution of 1962, for example, give insights into the different groups within the opposition movement and their motivations, the positioning of other countries towards the parties involved in both coup and countercoup, and into his personal experience of prison, but elaborate to a lesser extent on daily life in Sanaa.[10] Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Wazir's biography of Ali al-Wazir, Governor of Taiz in the 1930s, who was executed along with Imam Abdullah b. Ahmad al-Wazir, focuses on the latter's education, career, character, and actions, but not on his personal experiences or the overall situation in Sanaa.[11] Abd al-Qadir Hamza, an Egyptian journalist who stayed in Sanaa for two nights during the turmoil (24–26 February 1948) shares some of his own impressions and what he heard from others, such as Husayn al-Kibsi, the constitutional government's foreign affairs minister.[12] Beyond that, he concentrates on the broader political context and the role of Egypt. Both the reminiscences of Taqiyya Hamid al-Din, Imam Yahya's daughter, whose husband Abdullah b. Ali al-Wazir was involved in the plan to murder her father, the imam,[13] and those of Amat al-Latif al-Wazir, the daughter of Imam Abdullah b. Ahmad al-Wazir, represent long-unheard voices on the coup and countercoup. They give absorbing and highly personal insights into how their own lives were affected by the events, but do not allude to the impact of the turmoil on the Jewish community.[14]

I refer to the mentioned Muslim-Yemeni accounts when they refer to details also mentioned by Mansura and M. al-Zahiri. The aim of this article, however, is not to 'reconstruct' events historically but 'to complement the accounts conventionally conceived of as "political history"'.[15] The idea is to make the narratives of these two sources accessible to a non-Hebrew audience, especially the Yemeni and Yemen-focused research community and thereby induce further research and discussion on the impact of the events on subsequent developments in Yemen and on the mass migration of Jews from Yemen. The turmoil of 1948 brought a profound change in the situation of the inhabitants of Sanaa. For the Jews of Sanaa and Yemen in general, the political instability following the assassination of Imam Yahya and hence the loss of a strong and long-time proven protector seems to have been a key factor – apart from the declaration to establish a Jewish state in mandatory Palestine (18 May 1948), the promotion of migration by Zionist agents, and rising tension between Muslims and Jews in neighbouring British Aden and one case of blood libel in Sanaa – in the mass migration of about 50,000 Yemeni Jews between 1949 and 1951.[16]

The sources and their authors

Rabbi Salim b. Yaʿish Mansura was born in Sanaa in 1916.[17] He studied religious and secular topics with various teachers, among them Rabbi Yahya al-Qafih (1850–1932) and Rabbi Yahya al-Abyad (1873–1935), both leading figures in the Jewish reform movement in Sanaa.[18] As a teenager, Mansura joined his father's business producing wine and rosewater. After the final takeover by Imam Ahmad Hamid al-Din in March 1948, Mansura moved to Taiz. There he administered the correspondence between the Yemeni government and the Jewish communities in central and partly north Yemen, and helped to organize the first step (from Zaydi Yemen to British Aden) of the Jewish mass migration wave, later referred to as 'On Wings of Eagles' or 'Operation Magic Carpet'.[19] In May 1950, shortly before most Jews from Yemen – some communities in the north remained until recently – had migrated, Mansura left Yemen himself.[20] He settled in Rosh ha-ʿAyin, about thirty kilometres east of Tel Aviv/Jaffa, where he served as head of the city council from 1960 until 1973. He also took leading positions in the Yemenite Association, a political party founded in Mandatory Palestine in 1923. Mansura died in 2007.[21] His memoirs, titled *ʿAliyat marvad ha-kesamim* (Operation Magic Carpet), contain about 160

mostly handwritten document facsimiles in Hebrew and Arabic, some of which were signed, sealed or answered by Imam Ahmad and other members of the government.

Mordechai al-Zahiri was born in Radaʿ in 1930.[22] At the age of five, he moved to Sanaa with his family, where he studied with both Jewish and Muslim teachers, just as his father Salih al-Zahiri (later Zadok Yitshari) had done. According to the words of M. al-Zahiri, Salih al-Zahiri had studied as a young boy with some of Imam Yahya's sons, whom he knew from the time his mother worked as a seamstress for the Imam's household.[23] Mordechai al-Zahiri was taken hostage by Imam Ahmad's forces when his father, Salih al-Zahiri, fled Yemen after he was convicted of supporting the opposition movement and the coup of 1948 which he mainly supported in hope of reforms and modernisation of the country.[24] M. al-Zahiri left Yemen in 1949, and like Mansura settled in Rosh ha-ʿAyin, where he still lives today. He worked in education, was an active member of the workers' organization (*histadrut*) and published several books on Yemeni poetry and the Jews of Yemen. His memoirs, titled *Hayiti ben ʿaruba be-Teman* (I was a Hostage in Yemen), include some later photographs but no document facsimiles.

The two personal reminiscences are both vivid and compelling, and, as mentioned earlier, of particular value because they are among the very few written accounts that provide a deeper insight into how the events were received. They were published outside Yemen, decades after the events took place. Apart from simply telling their story, the two accounts are imbedded in the Israeli discourse in which they were published, namely the 'Mizrahi' encounter with and the rising challenge of Israeli socio-political discourse determined by Eurocentric Zionist epistemologies.[25] Their motive for publishing their reminiscences – and this is not a contradiction – seems to have been a desire to take part in the national redemption narrative by referring to serious and in part traumatic events and, at the same time, to the rejection of the notion of representing Yemeni Jews or 'Mizrahim' in general as a 'backward' and 'traditional-ethnic' element of Jewish society by underlining their agency and their proximity to leading political circles in Yemen.[26]

Looking at the accounts as historical sources, Mansura's narrative of how he 'convinced' Imam Ahmad 'to allow Jews to leave his country'[27] is the most problematic. His description of how he was instrumental in negotiating the secret deal between Imam Ahmad and Israeli government agents in Taiz that led to Imam Ahmad's consent to the migration of the Jews is exaggerated in the extreme, if not fictional.[28] At least this is the assessment of U.K.D. (a pseudonym), who as a young man and intelligence agent accompanied Yosef Zadok to some of the meetings with Imam Ahmad in Taiz.[29] Besides lack of evidence and discrepancies with sources such as Yosef Zadok (1914–1990) himself, who according to U.K.D. did negotiate the deal but due to the secrecy of the mission only hints at it in his book,[30] this appears probable in a careful reading of Mansura's own account. It seems unrealistic that he, as a private person, would negotiate with the head of state on whether to send planes or trucks to transport Yemeni Jews out of imamate territory.[31] It is no less striking that Mansura refers to the source of dreamy inspiration by Shalom Shabazi (1619– about 1720), the renowned Yemeni Jewish poet, when writing about the deal.[32] He does not make use of this fictional style element beyond his references to negotiating with Imam Ahmad.[33] Given the existing sources and Mansura's account, it seems likely that he had insider information, but in reality was merely responsible for organizing letter exchanges and individual travel permits once Imam Ahmad had given his general consent.[34] Mansura's presentation of his own influence on decisive actors seems likewise exaggerated with reference to other episodes. Imprisoned shortly after the al-Wazir coup and released only at the turn of the countercoup led by Imam Ahmad, Mansura cannot have witnessed all of the occasions he mentions himself. As he himself states, part of what he narrates goes back to what he heard from Prince (*sayf al-Islam*) Ali and others. Mordechai al-Zahiri states explicitly that some of his accounts are second-hand. Like Mansura, he points to Prince Ali as an informant, as well as to unnamed fellow prisoners, friends and acquaintances, all of whom he met after the events had taken place.[35] Overall, his account seems less problematic than Mansura's.[36]

Perhaps, in part, they indeed go back to Prince Ali, who to my knowledge did not write or publish reminiscences of his own.[37]

Striving to adhere to their accounts, nevertheless, and allowing their narratives to complement others and raise further discussion, this article gives a chronological overview of the events that occurred in Sanaa in the spring of 1948 as narrated by Mansura and M. al-Zahiri. In terms of analysis, I will focus on the question of how – according to these two viewpoints – the Jews of Sanaa experienced the 1948 turmoil in Sanaa that preceded their mass migration by about a year and hence most probably impacted on it. Following the emphasis of the sources on Imam Ahmad's recapture of the city from pro-al-Wazir fighters, the article also seeks to assess whether, and if so to what extent, the looting of Sanaa played a strategic role in the reconquest of Sanaa, or was merely the punishment of its inhabitants for failing to resist the coupists.

Chronology of events – The assassination of Imam Yahya and the Jews' encounter with the new rulers

Imam Yahya was on his way home for lunch when his car was ambushed in Sawad Hiziyaz, a few kilometres south of Sanaa, as he was heading back to the capital on his daily drive. Together with the prime minister, Abdullah b. Husayn al-ʿAmri (1304–1367/1887–1948),[38] one of his grandsons, Husayn b. al-Hasan, a soldier, and the driver of his car, Imam Yahya was shot dead on 17 February 1948/6 Rabiʿ II 1367 by three tribesmen assigned to the task by Abdullah al-Wazir and his allies at the outset of the coup in 1948.[39]

According to M. al-Zahiri's account, the assassins immediately informed Abdullah al-Wazir about the death of Imam Yahya, who in turn met his ally and military commander Jamal Jamil at al-ʿAwrazi military camp and from there continued on to Qasr Ghamdan, an ancient fortress incorporated into the city and its south-eastern wall near Jabal Nuqum, part of which functioned as the main prison in Sanaa. Here the newly proclaimed Imam Abdullah al-Wazir set up his headquarters and resided there for the next three weeks.[40] Shortly after Imam Yahya was assassinated, according to M. al-Zahiri, the new government institutions were secured by two battalions that had arrived at Ghamdan citadel in support of the coupists, one entering from *Bab al-Khuzayma* in the west, the other from *Bab al-Yaman* in the south. About the same time, Sayf al-Islam Ali Hamid al-Din arrived at the imam's palace (*dar al-saʿada*) to meet his father for lunch as was their custom every Tuesday, as M. al-Zahiri narrates. When the latter failed to arrive, and Prince Ali gradually became aware of the discomfort of the people around him, he and his driver left the city to find out the reason for his father's delay. On arrival at Sawad Hiziyaz, Sayf Ali found his father's body 'perforated with bullets'.[41] Ali now realized, M. al-Zahiri writes, that there had been a military coup, the first signs of which he had noticed while waiting for his father at Dar al-Saʿada. Re-entering Sanaa from *Bab al-Rum*, they brought Imam Yahya's body to Sayf Ali's house in Sanaa, where they met al-Sayyid Yahya al-Nahari, who was staying at the prince's house and immediately rushed to the telegraph station to cable a message to Wali al-ʿAhd Ahmad in Taiz that said 'His Excellency was assassinated. Beware!'[42]

M. al-Zahiri recounts that the Crown Prince dressed incognito like a regular soldier, gathered some fighters and headed to his stronghold in Hajja, a location with a military fortification that was safer than anywhere in Taiz, where an ambush had indeed been planned.[43] Perhaps simultaneous to al-Wazir's entry to Qasr Ghamdan and led by Jamal Jamil, the coupists occupied Dar al-Saʿada.[44] They shot Prince al-Husayn and Prince al-Muhsin and placed the entire family under house arrest.[45] The outer and inner gates of Sanaa were closed, so that people could not pass from the old city to *Biʾr al-ʿAzab* or the other way around, and rumours began to spread that Imam Yahya had been killed. M. al-Zahiri states that the inhabitants of Sanaa were 'panic-stricken',[46] and that Sayf Ali had spread the news that his father was well in order to

gain time for his brother Ahmad to arrive and calm people down. This strategy, however, does not seem to have lasted long, as according to M. al-Zahiri, Imam al-Wazir soon ordered an artillery unit to be positioned in front of Sayf Ali's house and threatened to destroy it if he failed to give himself up along with his father's corpse.[47] Neither M. al-Zahiri nor his father Salih or Salim Mansura provide further details on this episode. According to their accounts of the imprisonment of Sayf Ali and the burial of Imam Yahya later on, however, Sayf Ali seems to have surrendered to al-Wazir's demands. M. al-Zahiri continues with the funeral of Imam Yahya, who was buried on 18 February 1948, the day after his assassination, at the small graveyard next to al-Rahma Mosque, near *Bab al-Sabah* outside the old city.[48] He describes the day of Imam Yahya's funeral as 'one of the saddest days for the people of Sanaa, who accompanied him on his last journey with tears in their eyes'.[49]

After the funeral, M. al-Zahiri writes, 'the people' went back home and locked themselves into their houses. They were 'full of fear, confused and hopeless'.[50] The next morning (19 February), emissaries from the new government and the military appeared in various public places in the city to reassure people and request that they return to business as usual. A unit commanded by a man called Ali al-Jarmuzi entered the Jewish quarter (*qaʿ al-yahud*).[51] The inhabitants were ordered to gather in al-Sulbi square to hear some announcements. Among the notables who came to speak to the Jews was al-Qadi Abdullah al-Shamahi, then head of the court of appeal (*istiʾnaf*). He told the Jews that the 'new king', Abdullah al-Wazir, who had proclaimed himself imam once Imam Yahya's death was confirmed, was beginning a new era where social justice would reign in the country: 'Don't be afraid or anxious […] powerful countries have promised to help the new government […], open your shops and go back to work'.[52]

It seems that the people of Sanaa acted accordingly. Following M. al-Zahiri's account, the days after Imam Yahya's funeral were relatively quiet. This changed about ten days later, when the telegraph line was cut and rumours spread that Imam Yahya's son Ahmad was approaching the capital with his fighters as Abdullah al-Wazir had declared himself imam immediately after the assassination of Iman Yahya.[53] This is where Salim Mansura's account begins.

According to Mansura, the leading Jewish actors in Sanaa were divided about the continuity of the new government. He does not state whether a Jewish delegation officially paid homage to Imam Abdullah al-Wazir. Whereas one member of the Jewish community, namely the above-mentioned Salih al-Zahiri, was known to have actively supported the revolutionaries, neither of the sources states whether there was a general tendency among members of the Jewish community to welcome the new government or reject it. It seems that the majority of the Jews did not take sides with either of the claimants for the imamate but as a minority would have endeavoured to live with either one of them. Following the sources, the majority of Jews in Sanaa apart from a few individuals was far more concerned about the unstable political situation, inner security, and their personal fate in an unknown future than with the ins and outs of government personnel or its international recognition.

Mansura remarks that rumours about Imam Ahmad's troops approaching the capital became more concrete when he received a letter from his relative Yaʿish b. Yusif Mansura from ʿAmran, which lies fifty kilometres north-west and half way between Sanaa and Hajja, one that aroused fears of civil war and the possible siege of Sanaa.[54] Some members of the Jewish community, such as Yisraʾel Mashriqi, are said to have been confident that 'there isn't an imam anymore, but a republic'.[55] Mansura, however, was among those who, according to his own statement, agreed to send a messenger to his relative in ʿAmran, asking him to deliver a head of cattle to Imam Ahmad in Hajja as a sign of homage and appeasement in the name of the Sanaa Jewish community.[56]

The messenger was caught and Mansura arrested and brought to Jamal Jamil, who is said to have investigated Mansura's possible support for the pro-Ahmad camp. Following Mansura's account, two tribesmen, Abd al-Wali al-Dhahabi and Muhammad Husayn Zahra, whom he knew through their mutual friend Salih al-Zahiri and who stood behind al-Wazir were present in Jamal

Jamil's office at the time of his interrogation and supported Mansura's claim of innocence.[57] Mansura was nonetheless sent to prison (not mentioned by name), where he remained until Imam Ahmad gave the order to release those imprisoned for supporting him shortly after Abdullah al-Wazir and Jamal Jamil had been captured on Friday morning, 12 March, as he writes. In prison he met Salih al-Zahiri, who seems to have been released after his two tribal friends mentioned earlier had contacted Abdullah al-Wazir to confirm S. al-Zahiri's support for the coupists.[58]

The recapture: Dar al-Saʿada, Qasr Ghamdan, and the broader picture of Imam Ahmad's military strategy

Salim Mansura continues that at some point in his approximately three-week stay in prison, the prison director, Ahmad Muʿizz, whom he describes as his friend, treated him to coffee in his office and confided in him that he secretly supported Imam Ahmad's camp by delivering letters brought by a messenger from Ahmad's office in Hajja to some of his supporters in Sanaa who outwardly supported Abdullah al-Wazir but were in fact working against him. According to Mansura's account, the letters were delivered each night through a small hole in the prison wall. The following morning, the prison director would distribute the letters in Sanaa and collect the replies, which were then sent to Hajja by the same procedure.[59]

Finding it difficult to read and write – as Mansura claims – Ahmad Muʿizz asked Mansura for help with a letter addressed to him personally from Imam Ahmad's office. Without giving details of the letter, Mansura states that their reply informed Imam Ahmad of the situation in Sanaa and included the names of the prisoners accused of supporting him. Mansura admits to adding a personal note to Imam Ahmad, in which he wished him success in defeating the revolutionaries, asked for help, and explained the circumstances of his own imprisonment.[60]

That same evening, he joined Ahmad Muʿizz to receive the daily package of letters from Imam Ahmad's messenger. One of them was to be delivered to Abdullah al-Hushayshi, the main guard at Dar al-Saʿada, containing a message for 'the queen', Huriyya al-Mutawakkil.[61] According to Mansura, Imam Ahmad wrote that he had sent about six hundred soldiers to the capital and asked his family to let them sneak into the palace grounds through a hole in the wall that was to be enlarged secretly at night. He also ordered the women in the palace to move to the upper floors and prepare food to accommodate the soldiers in the lower areas of the houses.[62] Following Mansura's account, Ahmad Muʿizz, who outwardly supported the new government, succeeded in getting Jamal Jamil's consent to enter the palace under false pretences (supposedly made up by Mansura himself) and deliver the message to al-Hushayshi, who passed it on via the doorkeeper of the women's section of the palace to Huriyya al-Mutawakkil.[63]

Apart from Mansura's claim to have invented this strategy himself, it also seems unlikely that the prison guard responsible for the letter exchange was illiterate. Following Mansura's account, Imam Ahmad's order was carried out and the pro-Ahmad soldiers entered the palace grounds during the night, bringing with them a vast replenishment of food and weapons. The next morning, the soldiers began firing all over the place, including at the office of the new military commander-in-chief, Jamal Jamil, which according to M. al-Zahiri was located in the municipality close to the palace in the Bab al-Sabah area.[64] Jamal Jamil's soldiers took flight, while he himself is said to have hidden in the bathroom, where he was eventually caught, arrested and later taken to Hajja prison. As Mansura points out, he was executed in Sanaa in July 1948 with Imam Ahmad's personal sword.[65]

In his account of the takeover of Ghamdan citadel, Mansura shares what he heard from Sayf al-Islam Ali, after the capital was recaptured.[66] By and large it corresponds to that of Mordechai al-Zahiri. Both describe how the artillery soldiers located at al-Qasr turned against al-Wazir and defected to Imam Ahmad.[67] Each of the two, however, mentions different key actors and aspects that convinced the military commander at Qasr Ghamdan to desert al-Wazir.

According to Mansura, it was Thursday 11 March 1948 when Abdullah al-Wazir, his ministers and his tribal allies met at Qasr Ghamdan to discuss their next strategy.[68] Following his account (via Sayf Ali, who cannot possibly have witnessed the whole episode), they decided to assassinate the four princes held hostage at al-Qasr prison, that is, Sayf Ali and his brothers al-Qasim, Yahya and Ismaʿil, and display their bodies as a deterrent to those who opposed the new constitutional government.[69] Mansura mentions Sheikh Muhsin Harun as the one chosen to enter the princes' cell and kill them. Following his account, however, al-Qadi Abdullah al-Shawkani, a former secretary of Imam Yahya and apparent supporter of al-Wazir, came up with the idea of waiting until nighttime in order to minimize disturbance, take the princes out of their cell one by one under false pretences, and shoot them. Mansura states that al-Shawkani's idea was accepted by Abdullah al-Wazir and the others.[70] Still following Mansura's account, Abdullah al-Shawkani suggested postponing the assassination to gain time, since in reality he supported Imam Ahmad. Immediately after the meeting, he secretly rushed to the military commanders stationed at Qasr Ghamdan with the aim of convincing them to change sides. According to Mansura, al-Shawkani saw neither a strategic advantage in killing the princes, nor a realistic chance of the pro al-Wazir camp defeating Ahmad's troops. Against this background, he is said to have convinced the military commanders at Ghamdan citadel by warning them of possible revenge by Imam Ahmad for not saving his brothers, pointing at the same time to the opportunity – which following al-Mansura seems to have been al-Shawkani's principal motive – of rescuing themselves as front row loyal supporters of Ahmad, whose fighters would probably take over the city a few days later.[71]

M. al-Zahiri, refers to the princes' imprisonment at al-Qasr prison. He does not mention the plan to assassinate them, nor does he indicate that Abdullah al-Shawkani was a decisive actor in the changeover. Instead, he points to the tribal relation of the soldiers positioned at al-Qasr, the majority of whom belonged to Hashid and Bakil confederations, as well as to their commander (not mentioned by name) as a direct relative of Sheikh Nasir Mabkhut al-Ahmar of Hashid, who was closely related to Bayt Hamid al-Din.[72] M. al-Zahiri mentions a letter from Shaykh Nasir Mabkhut to the military commander, explaining why he did not support al-Wazir: 1) al-Wazir's responsibility for the assassination of the elderly and ailing Imam Yahya with whom he had 'a covenant of eternal friendship', and 2) his daughter's marriage to one of Imam Yahya's sons.[73] Following M. al-Zahiri's account, Sheikh Nasir Mabkhut al-Ahmar called on the military leader and the soldiers at al-Qasr to change sides in order to 'restore the dignity of the Hamid al-Din family' and the old imam, who had 'guided the umma for tens of years corresponding to the divine command given to Muhammad, his [God's, KH] messenger'.[74]

Regardless of who or what was the decisive factor, Mansura and M. al-Zahiri agree that the military commander and his soldiers had prepared the changeover. They distributed weapons and released the princes, who were to take a (symbolic?) leading role in the showdown of the countercoup at Qasr Ghamdan that took place on Friday or Saturday morning, 12 or 13 March 1948, about three weeks after the assassination of Imam Yahya.[75] Following Mansura (via Sayf Ali), the soldiers located at Qasr Ghamdan were led from now on by Sayf Ali himself. Cannons were directed at al-Wazir's room at Qasr Ghamdan and guards were positioned at the doors to prevent al-Wazir and his supporters from escaping.[76] On Friday morning, the soldiers began shooting into the room of Abdullah al-Wazir, who – according to Mansura – came down the stairs with his hands up in surrender and immediately delivered the imam's seal to Sayf al-Islam Ali.[77] His ankles were chained and he was put in the former princes' cell in al-Qasr prison, where more and more supporters of the constitutional government were detained in the days that followed.[78] M. al-Zahiri mentions that al-Wazir rejected his servant Rayhan's suggestion to fight against the countercoupists and die a 'hero's death'.[79] Following this account, it seems that al-Wazir was not aware of the gravity of the situation but still positive that his commander-in-chief, Jamal Jamil, would eliminate the 'treacherous unit' and help him to regain his throne.[80]

Combining the two accounts, it seems that both Jamal Jamil and Abdullah al-Wazir were captured simultaneously, which makes complete sense from a strategic point of view. Shortly after Abdullah al-Wazir was captured, all the prisoners accused of supporting Imam Ahmad's camp, among them Mansura himself, were released and torches lit at the top of Ghamdan citadel that Friday night, 12 March 1948, to symbolize the victory of Imam Ahmad, who was still in Hajja.[81] According to M. al-Zahiri, the people of Sanaa understood what had happened. Both Mansura and M. al-Zahiri agree that the inhabitants of the Muslim quarter lit torches and campfires all over the city to celebrate the victory of Imam Ahmad's troops.[82]

Contrary to what Mansura's report suggests, Dar al-Saʿada and Ghamdan citadel were neither the first nor the only places from which the reconquest of Imam Ahmad's troops began. In relation to what M. al-Zahiri writes, Mansura merely gives a short outline of the events. He focuses on certain situations in Sanaa and on his own – exaggerated – contribution to the reconquest, as well as his close relationship with some of what he calls the decisive actors. In contrast, M. al-Zahiri's account, which is also not first-hand in the case of many of the events, presents a broader picture and traces the overall military strategy of the recapture by Imam Ahmad.

According to M. al-Zahiri, Wali al-ʿahd Ahmad declared himself imam immediately after he was told of his father's assassination on 17 February 1948 and set out for his stronghold in Hajja. In remarkable accordance with Zaydi political theory of the imamate, he declared jihad against Abdullah al-Wazir and his supporters, calling on every possible fighter (*daʿwa*), to rise up (*khuruj*) against the 'illegitimate' rulers (*bughat*).[83] While some tribesmen may have responded to this religiously connoted duty out of conviction and loyalty to the Hamid al-Din family, others were 'bought' by pay and rations, as well as by the permission to keep anything they looted in Sanaa once the city had been recaptured.[84]

Following M. al-Zahiri, Imam Abdullah al-Wazir tried to keep his fighters loyal by offering five times more pay.[85] There were also volunteers from Aden who had been trained by the British and airlifted to Sanaa when al-Wazir took over.[86] M. al-Zahiri describes them as 'patrolling in the streets of Sanaa holding grenades in their hands that were not used by the Yemeni army'.[87] They also patrolled the Jewish market (*suq al-qaʿ*) and apparently made a frightening impression. Mansura for his part mentions 'refugees from Palestine', who joined the coupists and whom he had encountered when he was arrested in relation to the aforementioned letter to Imam Ahmad.[88]

As previously mentioned, the second week after the coup passed relatively quietly for the inhabitants of Sanaa, who slowly returned to life as usual, reopening their shops and businesses. The situation outside the city, however, was another matter and would soon affect the capital. As Imam Ahmad's troops approached the capital, soldiers were sent ahead to cut off the roads leading to the city. The districts of Khawlan, al-Hadda, Hashid and Bakil in particular were crowded with people looking for food and other supplies as a precaution in case of a siege.[89] According to M. al-Zahiri, about ten days after Imam Yahya's assassination, the telegraph wires were cut and the radio station silent. Shortly after, the capital and its surrounding pro-al-Wazir military posts were besieged and disconnected from the outside world.[90]

Alarmed by the escalating siege and ill-prepared, the constitutional government recruited the city's remaining young men and teenagers to defend the capital.[91] The granary was opened up and weapons supplied.[92] Disconnected from the telegraph service and other means of communication, the constitutional government made efforts to reach out to governors of other districts and cities that were pro-al-Wazir by dropping flyers from aircraft. It seems, however, that more and more pro-al-Wazir cities had lost confidence that supporting the new government would be to their advantage.[93]

During the second week after the coup, Imam Ahmad's troops conquered Shibam/Kawkaban, thirty-four kilometres north-west of Sanaa and gained the support of tribes like Khawlan, al-Hadda and Hamdan in the vicinity of the capital.[94] These fighters joined Imam Ahmad's troops

in besieging Sanaa and the pro-al-Wazir military posts around the city. M. al-Zahiri writes that besides cutting the capital off from external supplies, be it food, weapons, or information, pro-Ahmad fighters chased around outside the city walls at night, shooting – a strategy that seems to have targeted both soldiers and inhabitants inside the city walls to create the impression of far more troops than were actually there – and hid in the mountains during the day.[95]

What appeared to be the most powerfully armed and strategically important pro-al-Wazir military post outside the city was located at the top of Jabal Nuqum, a mountain about two kilometres south-east of Qasr Ghamdan.[96] This artillery post served to protect both the capital and Imam al-Wazir's headquarters. As M. al-Zahiri points out, however, the strength of a military unit not only depends on the number of weapons and soldiers; there must also be an adequate supply of food and water. During the first two weeks the soldiers on Jabal Nuqum did not suffer a shortage. At the beginning of the third week, however, no food reached the top of the mountain. For huge payments, according to M. al-Zahiri, local tribal men on the outskirts of the mountain supported Imam Ahmad's fighters in their bid to take over the former pro-al-Wazir poorly armed unit responsible for food and water supplies to the soldiers at the artillery post. Threatened with starvation or death by dehydration and probably not emotionally committed to al-Wazir's cause but paid to fight, the soldiers positioned at Jabal Nuqum defected, so that the artillery post and weapons soon fell to Ahmad's forces.[97]

The sources I consulted are not clear on the exact order of the next steps undertaken by Imam Ahmad's troops to finally recapture the capital. M. al-Zahiri states that campfires and torches were lit on Jabal Nuqum to signal that the position was now in the hands of Imam Ahmad's troops. They also indicate that for the next two days, the canons located at Jabal Nuqum and facing Ghamdan citadel, which were previously directed at the besieging soldiers, were now turned towards Sanaa and fired at the city and at Qasr Ghamdan. Following M. al-Zahiri, a similar strategy was used in the capture of the pro-al-Wazir military post at Jabal ʿAsar, an elevation in the west of the capital that, similar to Jabal Nuqum, was strategically important. He relates in his account that the soldiers stationed at Jabal ʿAsar followed those of Jabal Nuqum when they saw the torches at the top and firing directed at the city and Ghamdan citadel. Although M. al-Zahiri does not give chronological details, the structure of his account suggests that the soldiers positioned at Ghamdan palace changed sides shortly after Jabal Nuqum and Jabal ʿAsar (both outside the city walls) were recaptured.[98] This seems feasible and corresponds to Mansura's brief note that the alleged decision to kill the princes at Qasr Ghamdan was the result of pressure and despair at the 'suffocation Ahmad [i.e. his troops, KH] caused around Sanaa'.[99] On the chronological trajectory of the recapture of the imam's palace Dar al-Saʿada and the seizure of Jamal Jamil, Mansura gives no information. M. al-Zahiri briefly mentions that Sheikh al-Dhahab told his father, Salih, that Jamal Jamil escaped from his headquarters shortly after 'the torches appeared and the canons were heard' from Ghamdan citadel. He adds that Jamal Jamil, who according to M. al-Zahiri was looking for a hiding place all night, rejected an offer by Sheikh al-Dhahab to hide in his house in order not to cause trouble for the Sheikh's family. Following M. al-Zahiri's account, Jamal Jamil seems to have believed he would not be punished too harshly due to his Iraqi citizenship.[100] M. al-Zahiri stresses – and this is crucial to understanding the perception of the lootings by the inhabitants of Sanaa – that when the key strategic points in and outside of the city were taken, and torches lit all across the city to celebrate Imam Ahmad's success, none of Ahmad's fighters – besides those who had sneaked into Dar al-Saʿada and those who defected spontaneously – had entered the city of Sanaa, which according to M. al-Zahiri 'fell without any conquest'.[101]

The looting of the Jewish quarter

'The Jewish quarter was totally silent,' M. al-Zahiri writes. '[That] Friday night, every Jew locked himself in his house and watched the torches spark from the roof and illuminate the skies of

Sanaa from all over.'[102] Two hours later, 'the torches were extinguished', the 'cannons turned silent, and absolute calm reigned over the entire city as if nothing had happened'.[103] These words describe the situation in the Jewish quarter. What actually happened that night in the Muslim part of town was, according to M. al-Zahiri, that the princes sent out their supporters to quietly get hold of as many coup supporters as possible. People were arrested, and Abdullah al-Wazir was brought to Hajja prison (*al-qahira*), where he was executed three weeks later on 8 or 9 April 1948/28 Jumada I 1367.[104]

As mentioned above, it was Shabbat night (Friday to Saturday), which seems to be the main reason why, unlike the Muslim inhabitants of the city, Jews had not lit torches to celebrate Imam Ahmad's victory. Not only was it prohibited by Jewish law to light a fire on Shabbat, but the Zaydi imam and the government were keeping an eye on their Jewish subjects to make sure they did not violate Jewish divine law (Hebrew: *halacha*), referred to as 'their sharia' (*shariʿatahum*) in Yemeni-Zaydi discourse.[105] As a rule, Mordechai al-Zahiri accompanied his father Salih to the synagogue for Shabbat prayers at around two o'clock on Saturday mornings after a glass of *Qishr* (a spiced coffee husks infusion) and some raisins and dates. That particular morning, however, his mother did not wake him, as her husband had failed to return from his nightly tour of the Muslim quarter. Following Mordechai al-Zahiri's account, his father had felt such unease at the silence that he decided to take a look for himself. He walked to the Muslim part of town and asked his friend Sheikh Abd al-Wali al-Dhahab what was happening. The information he received did not bode well, since in the Sheikh's view 'there was a risk that Imam Ahmad's fighters were about to invade the city'.[106]

The looters broke into the Jewish quarter on Saturday morning from the direction of *Bab al-Hamad*, which connects the *Qaʿ al-Yahud* to the Muslim part of town in the south.[107] They destroyed the city wall, and shot at everything and everyone. They chased after people, including Muslims who were in the Jewish quarter at the time.[108] M. al-Zahiri points out two incidents that appear to have shocked him deeply and filled the inhabitants of the Jewish quarter with panic. One was the case of Muhi al-Din al-Anisi, who was chased by a group of looters who had fired at his car, injured him severely and finally took hold of him. The second case is that of an unnamed artillery soldier who was chased by 'tens of wizened foreheads and unknown scar-faced Arabs who burst through the western gate *Bab al-Balqa*'. Al-Zahiri goes on to say that 'they beat him up and smashed his skull to shreds […] I remember one of them, dressed in rags, flat-nosed and with a terrifying hole in his eye, who kept hitting the artillery soldier's body with his axe. The soldier fell to the ground devoid of any spirit of life, his corpse left between the walls.'[109]

Following al-Zahiri, the Jews ran to their houses in fright. Hundreds and then thousands of 'wild men' broke into Jews' houses and synagogues, threatened them with guns, raided their belongings, and 'shops were destroyed and windows broken'.[110] The plunderers took anything that came within their grasp: 'pillows, bedcovers, linen, carpets, clothes, and jewellery', as well as 'hardware, fabrics, spices, perfume, […] gold coins and copper tools, prayer shawls, and holy books'.[111] They first of all raided the houses of the rich, then of the poor and the really poor. The looters fired above people's heads and threatened to kill them if they did not disclose where they had hidden their gold and silver.[112] Following the advice of older community members who had experienced the siege of 1905 when Imam Yahya fought the Ottomans, people hid away as much as they could.[113] M. al-Zahiri writes: 'The cruel attack caused incredible fear. In every corner, loathsome thick-bearded people wandered around, […] behaved rudely and were cruel, like demons from hell, defiling [everything, KH] with insane evil.'[114] The plunderers even killed each other fighting over booty: 'The market was in ruins, walls collapsed, shelves were smashed and spices scattered and mixed all over the place.'[115] Both Mansura and M. al-Zahiri mention two Jews who were killed during the raid: an elderly widow who was shot when she opened her door, and a boy who said he did not know where the family silver was

hidden.[116] Most of the Jews seem to have let the looters raid their houses, shops and synagogues without resistance.

Following M. al-Zahiri, it appears that it was not Imam Ahmad's fighters who first entered the Jewish quarter. Instead, he points to 'the people of Balqa', a Muslim neighbourhood south east of the Jewish quarter, which is also mentioned by other Jewish sources in terms of the tension between its Muslim residents and those of the neighbouring Jewish quarter prior to and following the 1948 turmoil.[117] This included the alleged murder of two young Muslim women from Balqah, whose bodies were 'found' (or placed) in the Jewish quarter about eight months later.[118] According to M. al-Zahiri, they supported Abdullah al-Wazir until the day of the countercoup and defected to Imam Ahmad when the situation shifted.[119] Following his account, the 'people of Balqa' led the other looters into and through the Jewish quarter. He describes them as 'those who used to eat bread from the Jews'.[120] In other passages too, M. al-Zahiri points out that many of the plunderers were no strangers but well-known neighbours and 'friends', who up to then had been on good terms with the Jews.[121] He cites Abraham al-ʿArusi, a Jew who saw his Muslim acquaintance Mahmud entering his house with the looters and asked him: 'What is this, Mahmud? We are friends, and bread and salt connect us. Why did you come with them and rob me?'[122] Following M. al-Zahiri, Mahmud answered: 'Abraham, what can I do? We have an order [to do so].'[123]

A second group, mentioned by both M. al-Zahiri and Mansura, was composed of 'people from Hadda' led by Sheikh Muhammad al-Quwaysi. The village of Hadda, located about eight kilometres south of Sanaa, is mentioned by M. al-Zahiri as having supported Ahmad's troops in capturing the military camp at Jabal Nuqum at the beginning of the siege. Hence, they were recruited quite late to Imam Ahmad's troops. A third group of looters led by local plunderers from Balqa and Hadda is described by M. al-Zahiri in a somewhat exoticizing way as 'terrifying', 'unknown Arabs', or 'wild men' with a 'rough' outer appearance ('thick-bearded', 'flat-nosed', and 'scar-faced').[124]

The reaction of the princes and the looting of the Muslim part of the city

Both M. al-Zahiri and Mansura mention several attempts by individual princes from the Hamid al-Din family to stop the looting of the Jewish quarter and restore public order and security. Some of them seem to have visited the Jewish quarter themselves a couple of times, in order to calm people down and show presence. The situation in Sanaa was convoluted. So are the accounts of M. al-Zahiri and Mansura with reference to this stage of events. They constantly jump back and forth in time.

Mansura points out that he asked the soldiers sent to his house by the 'imam's sons' to inform Imam Ahmad about the looting of the Jewish quarter and ask for protection for the Jews of Sanaa and their belongings. According to him, one hour later the order was given to get hold of the invaders of the Jewish quarter.[125] Despite the shooting, Mansura stepped out of his house to see what was going on in the other neighbourhoods of Qaʿ al-Yahud, and according to his own statement he and his brother-in-law asked people to hide their belongings in their dwellings. When they were fired at near the market (but not injured), they fled back to the house. Mansura continues that after he had heard about the above-mentioned killing of a Jewish widow and a teenager by the invaders, he 'summoned Prince Abbas, who came with his soldiers and ordered the looters to leave the Jewish quarter immediately'.[126] M. al-Zahiri points out that the 'curiosity instincts of young age' had driven him onto the streets to see what was going on, but that he had run home after being injured.[127] He mentions Prince Abbas's appearance in the Jewish quarter. The prince came with a military unit to cast out the looters from the Jewish quarter. M. al-Zahiri, however, does not mention whether Mansura or anyone else initiated the prince's visit.[128] According to M. al-Zahiri, it took about an hour to rid Qaʿ

al-Yahud of the plunderers. They in turn 'continued to the Muslim part of town, which was announced by the government [of Imam Ahmad, KH] as no man's land'.[129]

Following M. al-Zahiri's account, the Muslim part of the city was 'in the plunderers' hands for about one week'.[130] The looters 'murdered, raped and robbed, and destroyed every beautiful corner of the capital'.[131] People who had fought for al-Wazir up to the day of the countercoup immediately defected to Imam Ahmad and in turn arrested their former commanders. They destroyed the city and killed each other. As M. al-Zahiri points out, some looters were killed by the people of Sanaa when they 'tried to rape their wives and daughters'. There seems to have been no organized resistance to the looters in the Muslim part of town either.[132]

Parallel to the looting, additional supporters of the coup were arrested and taken to Hajja prison. Several had dressed as women and attempted to flee undiscovered. M. al-Zahiri writes that he was an eyewitness to some of the incidents he described. It shocked him deeply to see dogs eating people's dead bodies, something he had never imagined could happen. 'Sanaa's Muslim women', according to M.al-Zahiri, 'who until the day before the looting had enchanted [their environment, KH] with their beauty and appeared from a distance in their colourful velvet clothes, were miserable, lonely and widowed.'[133] 'Multi-storey houses and splendid palaces were destroyed by the plunderers.'[134]

Coming back to Mansura, he writes that when he heard about how other members of the Jewish community, such as Yahya Sulayman Badihi, had been threatened with guns to make them reveal where they had hidden their belongings, he asked the officer responsible for the Jewish quarter (not mentioned by name) to give him soldiers to save some of the families from the invaders. In turn – according to Mansura's own report – he did his rounds of the quarter and placed soldiers at several corners to guard the streets, a strategy that stopped some invaders from hassling the Jews. He states: 'We chased the plunderers all day. The imam's soldiers shot one robber who was careless and a second plunderer was killed next to the house of Yahya Sharʿabi. A third was killed by his looting partner when they fought at the entrance to Yahya ʿUzayri's house at the market.'[135]

Mansura continues that on Sunday (14 March 1948),[136] two days after the countercoup, Sayf Ismaʿil and his brother Ibrahim came by car to his house, followed by a truckload of armed soldiers who were drumming all the way 'to give the Jews a sense of calm'.[137] In the context of this visit of the princes to the Jewish quarter, Mansura mentions an incident related to M. al-Zahiri's house. Following his account, he heard Mordechai's mother Nadra and sister Yona shouting for help and waving in the direction of the princes. Ten 'people from Haj Hazam' beat up her husband, Mordechai's father Salih, accusing him of hiding weapons and money that he had allegedly received from al-Wazir, which he denied. In this episode, Mansura also presents himself as the helping hand who convinced the princes to order the people of Haj Hazam to leave the house.[138]

M. al-Zahiri, however, does not mention Mansura at all. He writes that his father had indeed hidden weapons and money in his house for the opposition movement. Among them were weapons belonging to Sheikh Abd al-Wali b. Muhammad al-Dhahab, several Mauser 38 rifles, guns of various fabrication, and munition packages belonging to the movement. M. al-Zahiri points out that these weapons could have 'eliminated hundreds of looters', but they were not allowed to use them. Apparently the weapons were well hidden since the looters failed to find them when they were ransacking the house for silver, gold and jewellery.[139] In association with this incident, M. al-Zahiri also mentions Sayf Ismaʿil (but not Ibrahim), who passed through the main street of the Jewish quarter when the soldiers were at his house. According to M. al-Zahiri's own account, he and his mother – who had no knowledge of Salih al-Zahiri's secret business at the time – ran out to ask him for help. He writes that Prince Ismaʿil, whom he says was a frequent guest at their house, ordered five of his soldiers to supervise the soldiers who searched for weapons and ordered the latter to leave should they fail to find something soon.[140] The soldiers left in the afternoon with a bribe of 400 Riyal.[141]

This incident, however, only marks the beginning of an entirely different story, one that led to Mordechai's imprisonment as a hostage after his father Salih went into hiding in August 1948, when letters with proof of his support for the opposition movement were found at Abdullah b. Ahmad al-Wazir's house after the latter was executed.[142] Up to this point, soldiers had repeatedly come to al-Zahiri's house in search of weapons. These were secretly delivered to a relative's house and later handed over to Sheikh Abd al-Wali al-Dhahabi.[143]

Returning to the policy of the princes in Sanaa, Mansura mentions yet another visit of one of them to the Jewish quarter. It was on Monday 15 March, 'the third day after the liberation of Sanaa [from pro-al-Wazir forces, KH] by Imam Ahmad's forces',[144] when new shots were fired from Nubat Hamad, a tower overlooking the Jewish neighbourhood. Following Mansura's report, Sheikh Muhammad al-Quwaysi and 'his people, about three hundred men from Hadda village, assembled at the tower and from there fired at the houses of Jews and at people passing by'.[145] Together with David ʿUmaysi, a fellow Jew, and two soldiers that according to Mansura's own statement were given to him by Sayf Ali, he strolled through the streets of the Jewish quarter and finally reached the house of Rabbi ʿUzayri Abyad, where the leaders of the community had gathered to discuss what to do about the shooting by the 'people of Hadda'. Following Mansura, they decided to send him and the two soldiers to 'his friend' Sayf Ali, who according to Mansura was now acting governor of Sanaa while Imam Ahmad was in Hajja. Sayf Ali's brother al-Hassan became governor later on.[146] Under fire, both Mansura and ʿUmaysi ran to the second gate connecting the Jewish quarter with the Muslim part of town, Bab al-Buniya, which was locked but opened for the two by the guard Ali Majali. The chasers were shaken off.[147] Arriving at the house of Sayf Ali, Mansura found the latter in a meeting with his brothers, telling them about the 'people of Hadda' shooting all over the Jewish quarter. Following Mansura, Sayf Ali was worried about these 'Arabs' (probably referring to tribal men) initiating a rebellion and gave the order to send a truck full of soldiers to settle the affair. Mansura, who claims to have joined the soldiers and Sayf Ali on the truck, writes of the hundreds of Jews who surrounded the soldiers and 'shouted and cried out to them in fear'. Sayf Ali, according to Mansura, told the Jews: 'Do not be afraid. They are shooting at me and I am amongst you,' and in turn gave orders to shoot the looters located at the tower. Following Mansura's account, the latter immediately stopped shooting, and Sheikh Muhammad al-Quwaysi, the 'head of Hadda, ran to Sayf Ali, knelt at his feet, kissed them, and begged him to stop firing at them'.[148] Sayf Ali ordered him to go back to his village and reproved al-Quwaysi for daring to abuse the Jews 'after the imam ordered all the commanders to protect the Jews, not to injure them or touch them and their belongings'.[149] Sayf Ali then asked the Jews to return to their homes without fear, promising 'to protect them at every moment of every hour'.[150]

The aftermath of the looting and the appeasement of Imam Ahmad

When the looting gradually stopped, M. al-Zahrii and his father – like others from Sanaa – went to the nearby villages, such as Hadda, in order to buy back some of their private belongings and holy items from the synagogues, some of which were on offer at the markets immediately after the lootings. According to M. al-Zahiri, some of these things had already been processed into new items: parchment from Torah scrolls was converted into bags and flour sacks, while fabric that had previously covered the holy arches of the Torah shrines was made into girls' dresses, all of which, according to M. al-Zahiri, 'horrified the Jewish heart'.[151]

They met people in the villages they recognized from the looting, some of whom had at the time threatened M. al-Zahiri and his father personally. This seems to have greatly irritated M. al-Zahiri, since they showed no signs of shame whatsoever when his father asked them ironically how they were feeling after plundering the city.[152] A number of them seemed unaware

of the material value of some of the stolen items. According to his son Mordechai, S. al-Zahiri bought some gold coins at a knockdown price.[153]

After 'plunder Saturday' (*sabt al-nahb*), as Mansura calls it, and in the days that followed, peace and calm was nowhere to be found in Sanaa or its surroundings. According to Mansura, the 'people of Hadda' led by Sheikh al-Quwaysi took advantage of the absence of control to enter the city in small groups for about at least a week after the countercoup and take whatever they could find. Although 'their main target was the Muslim population' – as Mansura points out – Jews, too 'fell prey to murderers and robbers, and were terrified to leave their houses'.[154] They suffered from 'lack of security and food, as well as from high prices'. As Mansura writes, he decided to go to Hajja and call on Imam Ahmad himself after 'the rabbis and community leaders had failed to do something to improve the situation'.[155] With his friend Salih al-Zahiri, Mordechai's father, he set out for Hajja on 23 March 1948, about ten days after the countercoup, as he writes. Following his account, the trip was dangerous since the streets were not safe from robbery. On their way to Hajja they saw crowds of people, some loaded with items looted from the inhabitants of the capital, others heading there to get their share. It seems, however, that nothing serious happened to them on their way. The two men rode donkeys for the approximately 110 kilometres and were accompanied by 'one of the slaves of Sheikh Abd al-Wali al-Dhahab', who was under house arrest in Hajja due to his support for the coupists.[156] As a friend of the latter, Salih al-Zahiri went to visit him, but according to Mansura decided to return to Sanaa about ten days after their arrival, fearing that the authorities would discover his support for the coupists more easily if they knew of his connection to Sheikh Abd al-Wali al-Dhahab. Mansura stayed on in Hajja alone for a few days, where according to his own words he first met Sayf Mutahhar, and then Imam Ahmad, who was about to move to Taiz. According to his own account, Mansura paid homage to the new imam briefly, informed him of the lootings experienced by the Jews, and requested protection for them, which he was assured of orally. Following his account, Imam Ahmad even referred to the letter that Mansura had sent from prison after he was captured and brought to Jamal Jamil. It seems quite certain that Mansura and S. al-Zahiri indeed went to Hajja together. M. al-Zahiri also mentions the two men travelling together but writes that his father was invited by Imam Ahmad and accompanied by his friend Mansura. Following his account, Imam Ahmad did not have time for an audience as he was occupied with more important things.[157]

Coming back to Mansura's report on his stay in Hajja, he speaks of two incidents that hint at attempts to revolt against Imam Ahmad's takeover. He claims having heard from Sayf Mutahhar about some sheikhs who sought military support from the British to fight Imam Ahmad in Taiz, which, following Mansura's narrative, seems to have been the trigger for Imam Ahmad to leave Hajja and return to Taiz at the end of March or beginning of April 1948. Further, Mansura mentions witnessing a conversation between several sheikhs in Hajja who were planning to free Abdullah b. Ahmad al-Wazir from prison. Following his account, he immediately informed Imam Ahmad's son, Muhammad al-Badr, who in turn invited him to attend al-Wazir's execution with Imam Ahmad's personal sword, which had just arrived from Taiz.[158] Mansura does not seem to have witnessed the execution itself but saw the heads of those executed on display in the city centre.[159] These were later taken to Sanaa to be exhibited there. In his view, both Imam Ahmad's decision to move the capital to Taiz and the executions in particular seemed to mark the end of any attempts to rise up against the new imam. According to Mansura, 'this display caused fear and softened the hearts of anyone associated with the coupists or thought to revolt. From then on, the land was silent.'[160] M. al-Zahiri writes about the executions as well, and points out that contrary to normal procedure, the sentences were carried out without the involvement of the court of appeal or the Majlis. He emphasizes Imam Ahmad's brutality and writes that 'the people' were shocked at the number of executions and lack of fair trials.[161]

Conclusion

Both sources differentiate between two sets of events, the first being the coup and countercoup of 1948 itself, the second the looting of Sanaa and its Jewish quarter that happened after the city was recaptured by Imam Ahmad's forces. Whereas coup and countercoup created a general atmosphere of fear and insecurity in Sanaa, this first event did not spill over to Qaʿ al-Yahud in terms of concrete fighting or physical danger. This changed when the looters broke through the city walls from the Jewish quarter, a strategically favourable entry to the city given the distance from guarded government localities within the city and that the vast majority of its inhabitants were unarmed. The latter were not only horrified by the brutality of the looting, but particularly irritated to see of all people their acquaintances from the neighbouring Muslim quarters like al-Balqa accompanying or even leading the looters from outside Sanaa through the Jewish quarter. Parallel to this generally unpredictable, chaotic and frightening situation, both Mansura and al-Zahiri mention actors and deeds of trust, such as repeated visits to the Jewish quarter by some of the princes, who by responding, showing presence and restoring order in individual cases seem to have curbed some of the violence and had a calming effect, even though they failed to prevent the looting. Some of what Mansura and M. al-Zahiri relate may well go back to their and especially Sayf Ali's reports.

Regarding the military strategy of the pro-Ahmad forces, Mansura and M. al-Zahiri's accounts, particularly the latter, highlight the vast number of weapons belonging to the pro-al-Wazir camp and explain that for this reason it would have been impossible for Imam Ahmad's troops to conquer Sanaa through direct confrontation.[162] They add that this was one of the reasons why Imam Ahmad gave the order to besiege Sanaa and to smuggle his fighters inside the city and the walls of Dar al-Saʿada. The plan of the pro-Ahmad forces was to make the pro-al-Wazir soldiers located within the city defect. Mansura and M. al-Zahiri's insights into their campaign suggest that the lootings had played no strategic role whatsoever in recapturing the city, but merely served the purpose of paying the fighters and punishing the people of Sanaa, who had 'accepted the murder of his father, surrendered to the rule of al-Wazir and not avenged or protested against the assassination of their king'.[163] In their reminiscences, however, Imam Ahmad's responsibility for ordering or allowing the looting (by a fatwa not mentioned by Mansura and M. al-Zahiri) is given far less prominence than the deeds of the plunderers, which is remarkable.[164] Combined with Mansura and M. al-Zahiri's mentioning of Sayf Abbas's arrival in the capital as having a calming effect on the looting of the Jewish quarter, this raises the question as to who indeed initiated the looting of the Jewish quarter, and whether any general order or permit to plunder the capital, such as the aforementioned and to my knowledge unstudied fatwa by Imam Ahmad, took a concrete stand on the status of the Jewish quarter.[165] Due to the Jews' overall neutral positioning in the 1948 turmoil – S. Al-Zahiri's support for the opposition was an exceptional case detected long after the lootings – and the Jews' legal status as Dhimmis ('protected people'), who are not allowed to bear arms but whose lives and belongings must be protected against internal and external aggression by the (order of the) imam, an explicit inclusion of the Jewish quarter into that fatwa seems unlikely. This corresponds to the high probability that Sayf Abbas's visit to the Qaʿ al-Yahud and his reported attempt to stop the looting there was in line with official policies. His arrival in Sanaa was related to his official function as a military commander, since he led one of the three main military units to Sanaa under the command of his brother, Imam Ahmad, and due to his presence and command at the place is at times held responsible for ordering the looting of (the Muslim part of) Sanaa himself.[166] Assuming this hypothesis is correct, it might explain Mansura and M. al-Zahiri's focus on the actual looters rather than the authorities responsible and the repeated visits of various princes to the Jewish quarter. Mansura and M. al-Zahiri's reminiscences do not end here and are worth further study. They hint at the

difficulty of the Jews of Sanaa to connect with Sayf al-Islam Hasan, the new governor of Sanaa, who – partly due to the tension between himself and his brother Ahmad – appears to have ignored both their petitions and his brother Ahmad's orders. Although Imam Ahmad's general commitment to anchoring his Jewish subjects securely within the imamate is not questioned by either of the two accounts, Mansura's account in particular suggests that during the period following the 1948 turmoil Ahmad was preoccupied with re-establishing inner security and stability to such an extent that the Jews found it hard to draw his attention to their concerns. Whereas Imam Yahya was wont to respond quickly to even the most trivial request and could be approached by the Jews of Sanaa spontaneously at his audiences in Dar al-Saʿada, they now had to travel 300 kilometres to Taiz by donkey or on foot. This was not only a long, costly and exhausting trip, it was also dangerous. The roads were partly unsafe and controlled by tribal men, who were not committed to Imam Ahmad's course, and in the first months after the turmoil did not have to fear being brought to justice for raiding unarmed travellers. On the whole, both sources suggest that the break from Imam Yahya and the 1948 turmoil in Sanaa and its aftermath constituted a decisive factor for Sanaa's Jewish population to think more strongly in terms of migration.

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Notes

1. For the most recent overview, see Gabriele vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss: A Yemeni Woman's Life Story* (London: Hurst, 2016), pp.42–48. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190917289.003.0004.
2. See below for the different dates.
3. For research literature on the opposition movement, see J. Leigh Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement 1935–1962* (Beirut: American University, 1987); Ahmad Qayid al-Saʾidi, *Harakat al-muʿarada al-Yamaniyya fi ʿahd al-Imam Yahya b. Muhammad Hamid al-Din* [The Yemeni Oppositional Movement in the Era of al-Imam Yahya b. Muhammad Hamid al-Din] (Sanaa: Markaz al-Dirasat wa-l-Buhuth al-Yamani, 1983). For the original German version of the dissertation, see Ahmed Kaid al-Saidi, *Die Oppositionsbewegung im Jemen zur Zeit Imam Yahyas und der Putsch von 1948* (Berlin: Baalbek Verlag, 1981), and Abdulaziz K. al-Msaodi, 'The Yemeni Opposition Movement, 1918–1948 (Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1987). The article by Majid Khadduri, 'Coup and Counter-coup in the Yaman 1948', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-*) Vol.28, 1 (January 1952), pp.59–68, concentrates on the overall international political context and its main actors. For a brief overview of the actors involved in the coup of 1948, see Manfred W. Wenner, *Modern Yemen: 1918–1966* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp.91–96.
4. See Shalom Mansura [Salim Mansura], *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim: Teʾur ha-ʿaliya ha-gedola shel yehude Teman* [Operation Magic Carpet: A description of the great migration wave of the Jews of Yemen], ed. Moshe Gavra (Bnei Brak: ha-Makhon le-Heqer Hakhme Teman, 2003) and Mordechai Yishari [al-Zahiri], *Hayiti ben ʿaruba be-Teman* [I was a Hostage in Yemen] (Rosh ha-ʿAyin: Admor Press, 1989). In the text, I refer to both authors with the names they used when the events took place in Yemen.
5. There are of course 'historical facts', such as the 1948 turmoil in Sanaa that did indeed take place. When it comes to details, however, determining the 'right' or 'objective' narrative becomes more complex. In addition, official historiographies and state archive records evolve in particular historic-political contexts and discursive orders, but are seen at times to represent 'objective truth'. For a philosophical pragmatic approach to the debate on how to deal with the concept of 'truth and objectivity' in the discipline of history, see Marek Tamm, 'Truth, Objectivity and Evidence in History Writing', *Journal of the Philosophy of*

History Vol.8 (2014), pp.265–90. For the shifting boundaries between history and autobiography, see Kalle Pihlainen, 'Experience, Materiality and the Rules of Past Writing: Interrogating Reference', *Live Writing* Vol.16:4 (Sept. 2019), pp.617–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2019.1633251.

6. Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses, 'Introduction', in Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses (eds), *Knowledges born in Struggle: Constructing the Epistemologies of the Global South* (New York: Routledge, 2020), xviii.
7. The term 'subaltern' was conceived by Antonio Gramsci. For its further analytical development, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp.271–313, and subsequent research. For an overview of anthropological approaches to 'narratives' as 'representations of the past', see Maurice Bloch, *How We Think They Think: Approaches to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), pp.100–13. Regarding the Yemeni case, see vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.19, who points out that 'Life stories are never just about a particular human subject, but about cultural frames and local or national histories.' Vice versa, and as vom Bruck points out with reference to the reminiscences of Amat al-Latif al-Wazir, those of Mansura and M. al-Zahiri also contribute to our understanding of the political framework they lived in and the particular events they experienced.
8. For this meanwhile broadly accepted revised notion, see Isaac Hollander, *Jews and Muslims in Lower Yemen: A Study in Protection and Restraint, 1918–1949* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), Kerstin Hünefeld, *Imam Yahya Hamid ad-Din und die Juden in Sanaa (1904–1948): Die Dimension von Schutz (Dhimma) in den Dokumenten der Sammlung des Rabbi Salim b. Said al-Ǧamal* [Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din and the Jews of Sanaa (1904–1948): The Dimension of Protection (dhimma) in the document collection of Rabbi Salim b. Saʿid al-Jamal], (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2010), pp.101–07. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783112402450, Menashe Anzi, *The Jews of San'a, In The End of the Nineteenth Century and First Half of the Twentieth Century: An Historical Discussion in the Public Domain (1872–1950)* (Dissertation, Hebrew University Jerusalem, 2011), chapter 2 (in Hebrew, and not included in the author's book based on the dissertation, see below), and Mark Wagner, *Jews and Islamic Law in Early 20th-Century Yemen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).
9. During the time of my research in Sanaa (2011–2012) it was difficult to access material related to the imamate, such as Muhammad al-Zabara's *A'immat al-Yaman* [The Imams of Yemen]. The part of his chronology covering the years from 1931–1949 was considered 'lost' and is now planned for publication https://www.patreon.com/posts/yemen-completing-69452472 [accessed 29 November 2022]. The situation has changed since the Huthi takeover in 2014, and more sources related to the imamate might become available in the future. For an overview of autobiographical writing from post-revolutionary Yemen, see vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, pp.9–14. On the discrimination of Hashimis and other people associated with the pre-1962 imamate elite, see Gabriele vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and Markus Wachowski, *Sāda in Ṣanʿāʾ: Zur Fremd- und Eigenwahrnehmung der Prophetennachkommen in der Republik Jemen* [Sada in Sanaa: Perception and Self-perception of Descendants of the Prophet in the Republic of Yemen] (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2004).
10. Apart from a few references to 'the Jews' in Palestine and the conflict involved, the only mention of a Jew that I came across is his encounter with Salim ʿAmran, whom he met during his time in prison after the coup had failed. Salim ʿAmran had already been detained for twenty years by then. He had murdered his cousin and seems to have intrigued al-Shami and his fellow prisoners in the opposition with his knowledge on the right pronunciation of the Quran. See Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir fi-l-Yaman* [The Wind of Change in Yemen] (Jeddah: al-Matbaʿa al-ʿArabiyya, 1984), p.347. For Ali al-Wazir's stay in prison, see Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Abdullah al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir al-kabir ʿAli b. ʿAbdullah al-Wazir* [The Life of Amir Ali b. Abdullah al-Wazir] (Sanaa: Manshurat al-ʿAsr al-Hadith, 1987), pp.497–501.
11. See al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir al-kabir*. On his death, see pp.513–16.
12. For his account, see Abd al-Qadir Hamza, *Laylatan fi-l-Yaman* [Two Nights in Yemen] (Cairo: Dar al-Nil li-l-Tibaʿa, 1948). It includes photographs and illustrations related to the events. Hamza was one of the journalists sent to Yemen (via Riyadh), after Imam al-Wazir informed the Arab League of the danger of Imam Ahmad's reconquest of the city. For the Egyptian delegation, see Abdullah Abd al-Karim al-Jarafi, *Al-muqtataf min taʾrikh al-Yaman* [An Anthology of the History of Yemen] (Beirut: mansuhrat al-ʿAsr al-hadith, 1987), pp.336–37.
13. See Taqiyya bt. al-Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din, *Yatimat al-ahzan min hawadith al-zaman: dhikrayati* [The Orphan of Sorrow: of the events of time – my memories] (Beirut: publisher unknown, 2008). Her account includes pictures of her brothers and childhood memories of her father, Imam Yahya. Regarding Jews, she mentions (p.21) her nanny Muʾmina and other female Jewish servants who had converted to Islam under the guidance of Imam Yahya's wife Huriyya al-Mutawakkil.
14. For an analysis of Amat al-Latif al-Wazir's reminiscences, see vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*. The book includes short recollections of other members of the al-Wazir family and those associated with the elite of the imamate.
15. vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.10.

16. This migration is a complex matter and needs further research based on the situation in Zaydi Yemen and on Yemeni sources. For a critical study focusing on the situation of migrants in British Aden, see Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, *The 'Magic Carpet' Exodus of Yemenite Jewry: An Israeli Formative Myth* (Chicago: Sussex Academic Press, 2014). For a focus on British sources, see Tudor Parfitt, *The Road to Redemption: The Jews of the Yemen 1900–1950* (Leiden: Brill, 1996). For a focus on Yemeni Muslim and Jewish sources referring to the situation of Jews under the reign of Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din shortly before their migration, see Kerstin Hünefeld, *Dhimma im Kontext des zaiditischen Jemen: Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din (1869–1948), die Juden:Jüdinnen von Sanaa und die Aushandlung islamrechtlich legitimierter Regierungsführung* [Dhimma in Zaydi Yemen: Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din (1869–1948): the Jews of Sanaa, and the Negotiation of Islamic Governance] (De Gruyter: Berlin, forthcoming 2023). The study briefly refers to Imam Ahmad's motivation for allowing this migration (chapter 6.5) and solves the seemingly ambivalent dhimma politics of Imam Yahya addressed by scholars such as Tudor Parfitt, 'The Jewish Image of the Imam: Paradox or Paradigm', in Tudor Parfitt and Yehuda Nini (eds), *Israel and Ishmael: Studies in Muslim Jewish Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp.205–22.
17. See the editor's preface in Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.11–14. For a short biography in English, see Mark Wagner, 'Salim Mansura (Shalom Mantzura)', in Norman A. Stillman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Jews of the Islamic World*: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_000790 (accessed 29 September 2021).
18. See Yehuda Ratzaby, 'Kafah (Kafih), Yihye ben Solomon', in Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (eds), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition, vol. 11 (Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), p.703, Gale eBooks, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587510543/GVRL?u=huji&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid = 26589633 and Yehuda Ratzaby, 'Abyaḍ, Yihya ben Shalom' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p.346, Gale eBooks, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587500339/GVRL?u=huji&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=d9c397c3 (both accessed 6 October 2021). On the Jewish reform movement and the school founded by Yahya al-Qafih, see Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman, 'The Dor De'a School of San'a', in Norman A. Stillman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World,* Brill Online, 2012 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0006270 (accessed 6 October 2021).
19. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.63–64. On the migration, see Meir-Glitzenstein, *The 'Magic Carpet'*.
20. On the Jews remaining in Yemen, see Danny Bar-Maoz, 'The Jewish Remnant in Yemen (1962–2017) – A Community on the Brink of Assimilation', in Rachel Yedid and Danny Bar-Maoz (eds), *Ascending the Palm Tree: An Anthology of the Yemenite Jewish Heritage* (Rehovot: Eʿele BeTamar, 2018), pp.351–67.
21. See the editor's preface in Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.14. Some of his accounts are addressed in Mark Wagner, *Jews and Islamic Law in Early 20th-Century Yemen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).
22. There is a short biographical entry (in Hebrew) on the site of the (Yemeni-Jewish-Israeli) *Association for Society and Culture* in Netanya https://teman.org.il/content/6824 (accessed 29 September 2021). On his father's biography, see Mark Wagner, 'Yitzhari, Zadok (Salih al-Zahiri)', in *Encyclopedia of the Jews of the Islamic World*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_000792 (accessed 29 September 2021). Salih al-Zahiri also published his reminiscences, but focuses on the events in Sanaa in 1948 to a much lesser extent than his son. Some of his memories are discussed and thus made accessible to a non-Hebrew reading audience by Wagner, *Jews and Islamic Law*. On the discovery of his support for the coup of 1948 and his arrest, see Zadok Yishari [Salih al-Zahiri], *Kax barahti mi-Teman* [In this way I escaped from Yemen] (Rosh ha-ʿAyin: private publication, 1988), pp.11–14 (his son's preface) and pp.28–30. I thank Mordechai al-Zahiri for our meeting in Rosh ha-ʿAyin in February 2021.
23. For a video shared on YouTube and probably also recorded in 2020 in which M. al-Zahiri talks about his life in Yemen, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkqDbc_UFp0 (accessed 30 November 2021).
24. On Salih al-Zahiri's support of the oppositional movement see Wagner, *Jews and Islamic Law*, pp.159–60, n. 48. He points out the latter's hometown Radaʿ and the tribes living in its eastern vicinity as an important centre of opposition to Imam Yahya's government. Due to their dhimma status, the former 'customary' research view merely saw the Jews of Yemen as passive objects. This notion, however, was revised by studies mentioned in n. 8 above and further publications by the authors concerned.
25. For the most recent publication on the Israeli-'Mizrahi' discourse and new 'Mizrahi' historiography, see various contributions in Aviad Moreno, Noah Gerber, Esther Meir-Glitzenstein and Ofer Shiff (eds), *The Long History of the Mizrahim: New Directions in the Study of Jews from Muslim Countries – In Tribute to Yaron Tsur* (Sde Boker: The Ben Gurion Research Insititute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, 2021). The case of Yemen is referred to by Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman and Menashe Anzi. English and Arabic translations of the book are in preparation. For an English overview of the volume, see Dario Miccoli's review in *Israel Studies* Vol.27:3 (autumn 2022), pp.190–98: https://DOI:10.2979/israelstudies.27.3.09. On Jewish migrant voices from Morocco, see Aviad Moreno, '"Inappropriate" Voices from the Past: Contextualizing Narratives from the First Group Tour of Olim from Northern Morocco to Their Former Hometowns', *European Journal of Jewish Studies* Vol.9 (2015), pp.52–68, https://doi.org/10.1163/1872471X-12341272.

26. See Yaron Tsur, 'The Israeli Historiography and the Ethnic Problem', in Benny Morris (ed.), *Making Israel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), pp.234–35.
27. Editor's preface in Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.433.
28. For this sequence, see Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.62–75.
29. Personal communication with U.K.D. in Venice, 2009. I would like to express my debt to the late Yehuda Nini (1930–2020) for putting me in touch with U.K.D. Together with Nini, who knew U.K.D. well and had no doubt about his credibility, I conducted several informal and unrecorded interviews with U.K.D., who – shortly before his recent death – gave me permission to quote him on what he had revealed about his activity in Yemen. Up until now, and due to the secrecy of the mission in Yemen, Yosef Zadok was officially known (and mentioned in research) for his activity in British Aden only.
30. Yosef Zadok, *Be-seʿarot Teman* [In the Storms of Yemen: Annals of the Magic Carpet] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1956), pp.219–20, hints at details of the deal (information, money, weapons) and Imam Ahmad's possible considerations (military strength of Zionist forces during and after the war of 1948, the declaration of a Jewish state and – related to these developments – the possibility of Yemeni Jews demanding the abolition of Dhimma law in favour of equal rights if they stayed in Yemen). The deal is addressed in Hünefeld, *Dhimma im Kontext*, chapter 6.5. There are several people named Yosef Zadok; this Yosef Zadok was born in Sanaa in 1914, migrated to mandatory Palestine in 1929, and died in Holon in 1990. During the years 1949–1950 he worked for the Jewish Agency in British Aden and from there entered Zaydi Yemen on a secret mission.
31. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.78–79.
32. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.65.
33. On the tension between fiction and non-fiction in autobiographical writing, or perhaps the 'negotiation' of their boundaries, see Kalle Pihlainen, 'Experience, Materiality and the Rules of Past Writing', pp.619–20.
34. Personal communication with U.K.D. in Venice, 2009.
35. For the integration of recollections by others into one's own reminiscences, see vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.23.
36. On similar challenges regarding the source collection of Salim Saʿid al-Jamal (later Shalom Gamliel), a contemporary of the two accounts dealt with in this article, see Hünefeld, *Imam Yahya Hamid ad-Din und die Juden*, pp.101–07 and Menashe Anzi, *ha-Sanʿanim: Yehudim be-Teman ha-muslemit, 1872–1950* [The Sanʿanis: Jews in Muslim Yemen, 1872–1950] (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2021), pp.44–48. On questions of credibility of the narrative of a Yemeni Jewish source from the nineteenth century, see Alan Verskin, *A Vision of Yemen: Travels of a European Orientalist and His Native Guide, a Translation of Hayyim Habshush's Travelogue* (Stanford: Standford University Press, 2019), pp.32–35. In contrast to that account, but similar to that of Gamliel, however, the accounts of both Mansura and M. al-Zahiri were published in a completely different socio-political context than that of Habshush, see above n. 25 and n. 26. Of course, the details that I or other researchers see as more relevant and my translations from Hebrew to English add another layer to the overall challenge of working with personal reminiscences. For reflections on and further bibliographic references to the (power) relationship between researcher and source, see vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.16.
37. For published Yemeni Muslim accounts of that period, see above.
38. For a short biography, see Yusuf b. Muhammad Abdullah, 'al-ʿAmri (Abdullah b. Husayn)', in Ahmad Jaber Afif (ed.), *al-Mawsuʿa al-Yamania*, Vol.3 (Sanaa, 1423/2003), pp.2171–172.
39. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.23–24. This corresponds to al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.440–41 and Hamza, *Laylatan*, pp.19–20. For an account of the imam's death notice by Imam Yahya's daughter and background information on the assassination, compare Hamid al-Din, *Yatimat al-ahzan*, pp.70–79. Al-Wazir appointed Sheikh Ali Nasir al-Qardaʿi to assassinate the imam. See Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, p.138. A fatwa that legalized the assassination was issued by Husayn al-Kibsi, who became Foreign Minister in al-Wazir's government, see Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.56.
40. This corresponds to al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, pp.235 and 256–57.
41. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.25. Hamza, *Laylatan*, pp.41–42, speaks of more than a hundred bullets fired at the imam's car.
42. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.26.
43. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.33–34. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, pp.228–30, Hamza, *Laylatan*, pp.60–62, and Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.442–43, also mention the plan to assassinate Ahmad. Al-Wazir's description raises doubts about the secrecy of his escape, referring to twenty cars and soldiers that accompanied him (p.447). He gives further details on Imam Ahmad's journey to Hajja and a stop in Bajil.
44. See also Hamza, *Laylatan*, p.20 and al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.442 (Jamal Jamil) and 440–47 (Imam al-Wazir at Qasr Ghamdan, with details on his bayʿa).
45. For photographs related to the events at Dar al-Saʿada, see Hamza, *Laylatan*, pp.37 (the princes' car), 39 (Sayf al-Islam al-Husayn), and 45 (carpenters manufacturing coffins for the two princes). See also al-Wazir,

Hayat al-amir, pp.440 and 455 (mention of Mabkhut b. Ali Saʿd as a commander of Jamal Jamil's troops who later defected to Imam Ahmad).

46. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.27.
47. To keep the soldiers on his side, al-Wazir is said to have announced that the new government would quintuple their pay.
48. According to M. al-Zahiri, this burial place was Imam Yahya's wish should he not die of natural causes. If he died a natural death, however, he is said to have chosen a grave site fifteen years earlier located in the grounds of his palace. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.28. In 2014, during my last visit to Yemen, Imam Yahya's grave was still being taken care of and could be visited.
49. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.28. The late Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Mansur (1915–2016) mentioned to me in a private conversation at his house in Sanaa in March 2011 that many Jews attended the imam's funeral in great grief. For his short biography, see Muhammad b. Muhammad Zabara, *Nuzhat al-nazar fi rijal al-qarn al-rabiʿ ʿashar* [A Promenade Through the Men of the Fourteenth Century H] (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Irsad, 1431/2010), pp.627–28. For a song about Imam Yahya's assassination and its aftermath by Shlomo Muqʿa, translated into Hebrew by Mordechai al-Zahiri and Itamar Pinhas [Finhas], see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPVDSoc6owE [accessed 18 October 2021]. I would like to thank Yousef M. Hamidaddin for drawing my attention to three additional songs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKArwMO3ka4, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnaGZd9XDQM, and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drVEXTp653s (accessed 10 December 2021).
50. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.28.
51. I was not able to find information on him.
52. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.28–29 (citing al-Qadi Abdullah al-Shamahi). According to him, al-Shamahi added that the Jews would be punished if they did not open their shops again.
53. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.29. According to Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, p.142, he declared himself in Hajja on 25 February and in turn informed the Arab league. Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, p.104, states that Imam Ahmad himself did not actively participate in the recapture of Sanaa. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, p.257, also mentions that the telegraph was cut at some point.
54. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim,* pp.34–35. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, p.257, mentions that it was unclear at first whether Ahmad had also been assassinated.
55. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.35.
56. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.35–36.
57. Mansura writes that he claimed his father's house had been demolished by order of Imam Yahya after he had been accused of selling alcohol to Muslims. And that given this background he would hardly have had an interest in supporting the latter's son Ahmad. The two tribesmen are said to have confirmed the incident. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.36.
58. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.37.
59. He notes that if he trusted the recipient, he would hand over the letter personally or throw it into the addressee's courtyard. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.37–38.
60. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.38.
61. For a list of Imam Yahya's wives, see Gabriele vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.255.
62. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.38.
63. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.38–39.
64. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.29.
65. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.39 (sword). For a short biography of Jamal Jamil in English, see Robert D. Burrowes and Charles Schmitz (eds), *Historical Dictionary of Yemen* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010) 176. For Arabic, see al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, p.542.
66. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.40.
67. M. al-Zahiri does not reveal his source. It could be Sayf ʿAli or some tribal actor, as he was acquainted with both. For his account, see M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.32–41. The event itself is also mentioned by al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, p.228, who points to it as one of the reasons why the coupists were defeated, and by al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.468–70 and 473. Neither of them elaborates on the details.
68. Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, p.451 speaks of 'the Sheikhs of Arhab' and members of the Khawlan tribe as supporters of Imam al-Wazir.
69. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir,* p.67 and al-Jarafi, *Al-muqtataf*, p.337, also mention the princes' imprisonment in the citadel.
70. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.40.
71. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.40–41.
72. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.36, al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, pp.233–34, and Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp.221–23. Research literature on the coup of 1948 relates to 'the tribes' (mainly Hashid and Bakil) as having had 'mixed feelings' towards the constitutional government.

Whereas many Sheikhs were in favour of supporting the coup at first, they later seem to have changed sides back to Imam Ahmad when they heard about Imam Yahya's assassination and realized that none of them were to be included in the constitutional government. See al-Msaodi, *The Yemeni Opposition Movement*, pp.218–28.

73. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.36–37.
74. Sheikh Nasir Mabkhut as cited by M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.37. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, p.223, and al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, p.456 (citing al-Amir Ali al-Wazir), point to the assassination of the old imam and his minor grandson as one reason why the attempt at a lasting political takeover after the coup failed.
75. Al-Zahiri gives 'Friday, 13.3.1948' as the final takeover date, which was in fact a Saturday. Al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, p.468, refers in this context to Saturday, 3. Jumadi I 1367/13 March 1948. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, p.268, mentions that the sons of Imam Yahya, who were imprisoned in Qasr Ghamdan, commanded and 'bought' the soldiers.
76. Al-Jarafi, *Al-muqtataf*, p.337 indicates Sayf Ali's role in directing the cannon towards the room Imam al-Wazir was staying in, but does not give details of who commanded the soldiers.
77. Zayd al-Wazir refers to Prince Yahya as the driving force behind the takeover of Ghamdan citadel. The seal episode mentioned by Mansura and his overall underlining of Prince Ali's importance among the princes, increased my suspicion that Mansura might have exaggerated the influence of Sayf Ali – his informant – as well as his own influence. Indirectly, however, this account corresponds to Amat al-Latif al-Wazir's statement about a golden shafted sword and a chrysolite ring (not the imamic seal! KH) taken by Prince Ali after his father's execution. See vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.186 (Prince Yahya as a driving force) and 90 for the ring and sword.
78. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.39.
79. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.38.
80. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.38 (citing Abdullah al-Wazir). Al-Wazir's inactivity after Imam Yahya's assassination is also mentioned in research. While Robert W. Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), pp.220–21, attributes it to al-Wazir's 'moral guilt' of having ordered the elderly imam to be killed. Douglas, *The Free Yemeni Movement*, p.140, points out that his failure to assassinate his son Ahmad as well was a missed opportunity to take control.
81. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.39.
82. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.41–43 and M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.36–37. Given it was a Friday night (the eve of Shabbat), Jews did not light fires or torches. See also al-Shami, *Riyah al*-taghyiir, p.269, and Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, p.467.
83. Apart from jihad, M. al-Zahriri does not touch on any of the political terms mentioned. These were added by me. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.33. Regarding Imam Yahya's conceptualization of the Ottomans as *bughat*, see Hünefeld, *Dhimma im Kontext*, chapter 3.1.
84. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.33.
85. Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, p.453, mentions high sums offered to potential fighters in the regions of Nihm and Bani Hushaysh.
86. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.29–30.
87. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.31.
88. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.35. He does not give any details on these refugees, who perhaps fled the 1948 war over Palestine to Yemen. On the subject of foreigners who came to Sanaa during the events, al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, p.258, mentions a delegation from Egypt. Probably referring to the same delegation, al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.462–63, points to a visit to Imam al-Wazir by members of the Muslim Brotherhood.
89. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.29–30.
90. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.32. This corresponds to Hamza, *Laylatan*, p.63. For the tightening siege and takeover of Nuqum mountain, see also Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, p.467.
91. Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.468–69, speaks of several students of 'al-madrasa al-ʿilmiyya' who, under the leadership of Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Shami, resisted the looters in the Bab al-Balqa area close to the Jewish quarter.
92. Al-Zahiri mentions that the weapons were mostly of German origin. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.30.
93. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.33. This corresponds to the estimate of Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, p.102, who states that 'when Ahmad arrived in Hajja, the fate of ʿAbdullah al-Wazir's coup was sealed'.
94. Shibam/Kawkaban is also mentioned as a strategic point for recapture by al-Tayib Zein Abdin, 'The Role of Islam in the State: Yemen Arab Republic (1940–1972)' (Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1975), p.79, and Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, p.102, who mentions that Shiban/Kawkaban was taken by the coupist forces prior to approaching Hajja (which they never reached). See also al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.452 and 455–56, (Ali b. Hamud Sharaf al-Din's defection to Imam Ahmad and Shiban/Kawkaban's takeover by Imam Ahmad's troops).
95. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.32–33, and Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.38–39.
96. The post at Jabal Nuqum is also mentioned by Wenner, *Modern Yemen*, p.103. See al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.463–65, on pro-al-Wazir troops located at the mountain who later defected to Ahmad.

97. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.34. Al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, p.473, likewise mentions that the fighters were paid to defect.
98. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.34. See also al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, p.473.
99. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.40.
100. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.40.
101. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.38. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, pp.267 and 269–70, also mentions that the gates of the Muslim city were opened for the looters after Qasr Ghamdan was taken, and that the looting (*hujum*) began when the victory torches were lit. He gives a list of poems (pp.270–72) written on the Sanaa turmoil. Al-Jarafi, *Al-muqtataf*, p.338, writes that the guards opened the gates to let the tribes in, but here it remains unclear whether the looting took place after the city fell or had a strategic role in recapturing it. Hamza, *Laylatan*, p.66, writes that some of the gates were closed and that a number of looters entered from Biʾr al-ʿAzab, the quarter between Sanaa's historic town and the Jewish quarter. Al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, pp.473–74, mentions that soldiers approached the city from different sides while Qasr Ghamdan was being taken.
102. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.38.
103. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.39.
104. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.39, and less detailed, Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.41–42. For the execution of Abdullah al-Wazir and others, see al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.503–16. He gives 9 April 1948/28 Jumada I 1367.
105. See, for example, line 6 in Imam Yahya's letter to the Jewish community in Sanaa from 1905, Kerstin Hünefeld, '*Niẓām al-Yahūd* ("The Statute of the Jews"): Imam Yahya's writing to the Jews of Sanaa from 1323/1905', *Chronique du Manuscrit au Yémen* 16 (July 2013), pp.26–74. https://doi.org/10.4000/cmy.2012.
106. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.39.
107. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.40 and 42, and Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.42.
108. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.42.
109. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.41. He gives no special reason why the invaders targeted these two men of all people. Hamza, *Laylatan*, p.66, writes that the looters entered the city from Biʾr al-ʿAzab, the quarter between Sanaa's historic town and the Jewish quarter, north-west but close to the Balqa district. Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, pp.468–69, points to students defending Sanaa from the looters who were entering from Bab al-Balqa.
110. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.42.
111. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.51.
112. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.42–43.
113. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.44–45.
114. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.43 and 52.
115. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.44.
116. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.43–44. and Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.43.
117. See Shalom Gamliel, *ha-Yehudim ve-ha-melech be-Teman* [The Jews and the King in the Yemen], vol. 1 (Jerusalem: The Shalom Research Center, 1986), pp.101–3.
118. For an overview of three different narratives regarding that case of blood libel, see Wagner, *Jews and Islamic Law*, pp.146–50. One of the sources he mentions links the placing of the two bodies in the Jewish quarter to the motive of two influential men from al-Balqah, who were 'getting revenge for their embarrassment at having supported the coup against Imām Yaḥyā and the looting of their neighbourhood by tribesmen' (p.148). According to Parfitt, *Road to Redemption*, pp.188–92, this event caused the World Jewish Congress to push forward Jewish migration from Yemen. He cites a letter from A. Eastman to H. McNeil, London, 31 Dec. 1948. P.R.O. CO 537/4918. This should, however, be seen in relation to the context and consequently to the situation in Sanaa following the lootings and the involvement of the 'people of Balqa'. In all probability, information that reached the World Jewish Congress about the event came from a source within the Jewish community of Sanaa, someone who had experienced the looting of Sanaa and its Jewish neighbourhood before the blood libel took place. For students defending Sanaa from looters entering from Bab al-Balqa, see n. 91 above.
119. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.40.
120. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.43.
121. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.42 and 44.
122. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.44, citing Abraham.
123. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.44, citing Mahmud.
124. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.41.
125. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.42.
126. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.43. M. al-Zahiri adds that the boy, Harun al-ʿIraqi, was shot after he failed to hand over the silver. On him and on the widow who was shot as well, see M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.43–44. Abdullah b. Ali al-Wazir mentions Prince Abbas as one of three commanders (Sayyid

Ali b. Hamud Sharaf al-Din and Sayyid Ahmad b. Muhammad Mufadhdhal were the other two) who led Imam Ahmad's troops – the latter was not involved in the actual fighting – towards Sanaa for its recapture. See al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, pp.472–73. Interestingly, Amat al-Latif al-Wazir held Prince Abbas accountable for the looting, not Ahmad. See vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.252, n. 85 (English translation of the respective passage in al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*) and for Amat al-Latif al-Wazir's account, pp.88 and 90.

127. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.42.
128. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.46.
129. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.47.
130. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.47.
131. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.47. See also al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, pp.469–70.
132. Al-Shami, *Riyah al-taghyiir*, p.267, writes that one reason why Sanaa fell back into the hands of Imam Ahmad was the lack of resistance by its inhabitants. Al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, pp.468–69 speaks of students defending the city from Baba al-Balqa, see n. 91 above.
133. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.51
134. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.51.
135. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.43.
136. Mansura writes that the Monday after was 14 March, which does not correspond with the calendar. The Jewish date he gives for Monday, however, corresponds to 15 March 1948. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.44. According to Hamza, *Laylatan*, p.67, news of the recapture of Sanaa was broadcast on 14 March.
137. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.44. Sayf al-Haqq Ibrahim (1333–1367/1915–1948) seems to have flown from Aden to Sanaa on 28 February, see Douglas, *Free Yemeni Movement*, pp.144–46 (citing the *Sawt al-Yaman* newspaper and the British Broadcasting Corporation). Al-Wazir, *Hayat al-amir*, p.460, mentions that Sayf Ibrahim came to Sanaa during the second week of the coup. I was unable to verify the date of his arrest and delivery to Hajja prison, where he died (probably poisoned by order of his brother Imam Ahmad for supporting the opposition movement) on 22 Dhu al-Qaʿada 1367/26 Sept. 1948. For a brief biography, see Husayn Abdullah al-ʿAmri, 'Hamid al-Din (Ibrahim b. Yahya)', in Ahmad Jaber Afif (ed.) *al-Mawsuʿa al-Yamaniyya*, Vol.2, pp.1207–8. On Sayf al-Haqq Ibrahim, see also al-Wazir, *al-Amir al-Kabir*, pp.470–72.
138. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.44.
139. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.46.
140. M. al-Zahiri writes that Prince Ismaʿil, Prince Yahya and Prince Abdullah had been coming to his house for years and often took part in the Shabbat meal on Friday evening. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.49.
141. M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.48–49.
142. Salih al-Zahiri went to different hiding places around Yemen for about one and a half months, then crossed the border to British Aden and finally migrated to Israel. For details of his escape, see M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.64–69 and his father's reminiscences.
143. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.57–64. Up until the discovery of the compromising letters, Salih al-Zahiri was able to avoid imprisonment with the help of Muslim friends who as Sheikh al-Quwaysi and Sheikh al-Bukhaythi falsely confirmed his support for the pro-Ahmad camp. Huge bribes to the soldiers did the rest.
144. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.44.
145. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.44.
146. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.44.
147. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.45.
148. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.45.
149. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.45.
150. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.45.
151. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.51.
152. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.51–53.
153. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.52.
154. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.49.
155. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.49.
156. See Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, pp.49–50. They stopped at the Jewish community in Khawlan to listen to the reading of the 'book of Ester' as it was Purim, and then continued to Hajja during the night.
157. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.57–58.
158. Hamza, *Laylatan*, p.67, mentions Imam al-Wazir's beheading on 2 April 1948, but gives no further details.
159. This is also mentioned by Muhammad b. Abd al-Malik al-Mutawakkil in vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss,* p.199, and corresponds to what I heard during my research in Sanaa (2011–2012). Abbas b. Ali Zabarah, who was a child in 1948, remembers: 'I myself went to see the heads. Can you imagine a child's feeling seeing

the heads of forty people there? Nobody said anything. I was scared. I did not understand why they had been killed. Ahmad wanted to scare people.' See vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.202.

160. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.52. After Mansura had left Yemen, there was another coup attempt in 1955.
161. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, pp.54–58.
162. See M. Yishari, *Hayiti ben ʿaruba*, p.35.
163. Mansura, *ʿAliyat marwad ha-qesamim*, p.34. This corresponds to Huriyyah al-Haymi's memories in vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.200: 'The *qabaʾil* entered one house and saw the women living there crying. "Why are you crying?" they asked, "you killed the imam and you cry?"'
164. According to Zayd b. Ali b. Abdullah's memories of the 1948 events, Imam Ahmad declared the looting *halal* ('religiously permissible') in a fatwa. See vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.269, n. 9.
165. I do not know if this fatwa has been preserved. Studying it would certainly contribute to further elucidating the 1948 turmoil.
166. Amat al-Latif al-Wazir explicitly points to Sayf Abbas as the person responsible for the lootings when she says 'al-ʿAbbas, the imam's son, said to the *qabaʾil,* "Capture Sanʿa and take what you want."' See vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.88. On the contrary, Abbas b. Ali Zabarah, who was a child in 1948, remembers that 'Later al-ʿAbbas […] entered the city with his forces and things calmed down.' See vom Bruck, *Mirrored Loss*, p.202.